 0030-0950/84/0003-0074 $2.00/0

OCCUPATIONAL DIFFERENTIATION AND CHANGE IN AN OHIO AMISH SETTLEMENT[1]

THOMAS W. FOSTER, Department of Sociology, The Ohio State University at Mansfield, Mansfield, OH 44906

ABSTRACT. Ohio Amish Directories (1973 and 1982) for the Geauga-Trumbull-Ashtabula county Ohio settlement were analyzed to determine the percentage of male employed household heads who were engaged in farming, non-farming traditional, and non-traditional occupations. In 1982, of 891 Amish household heads, 31% of the total were found to be farmers, 37% were employed in non-farming traditional occupations and 32% were involved in non-traditional types of employment, including factory work. Despite the atypically small percentage of farmers in the settlement, a comparison of data from the 1973 and 1982 directories revealed that factory work was not continuously displacing farming employment in the region. For instance, the number of Amishmen who listed farming as their primary occupation actually increased more during the above 9-year period than did the number of those who listed their occupation as factory worker. Based upon both directory and interview data, it was concluded that the Geauga area Amish had experienced a considerable degree of success in culturally adapting to a given level of factory employment. Futhermore, contrary to the theoretical expectations of some scholars, the movement of the Geauga Amish out of farming and into more diversified — and often more secular — types of occupations has not resulted in the destruction, or the radical transformation, of their traditional Amish values.

OHIO J. SCI. 84 (3): 74-81, 1984

INTRODUCTION

America's Old Order Amish have been almost uniquely successful, among the nation's religious and ethnic minorities, in resisting change and in preserving the social integration of their small communities. In recent years however the Amish have been beset by a number of challenges to their traditional ways of life. Pressures for change have been especially intense in those settlements that have experienced the expansion of the larger society around and into areas that were once predominantly Amish and agricultural e.g., Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania, Plain City, Ohio or Geauga Co., Ohio. Some of the pressures affecting Amish settlements include the external influences of urbanization, industrialization and tourism, and the internal influences of high rates of population growth, coupled with a related movement out of farming and into factory employment.

In some settlements, such as Plain City, Ohio, external and internal pressures have resulted in large-scale out-migrations, while in others e.g., Geauga Co., Ohio, the Amish largely have remained within their settlements. The focus of the present study is on how the Amish who live in the Geauga-Trumbull-Ashtabula county area are accommodating to, and coping with, the forces of change. In addition, there is the question of how to best measure the impact of change and stability upon the Amish.

The approach used here follows the example of Martineau and MacQueen (1977) in using occupational differentiation to study change in an Old Order settlement. However the present study includes longitudinal, as well as cross-sectional, employment data. These data were mainly tabulated from statistics taken from the

[1]Manuscript received 13 October 1983 and in revised form 30 March 1984 (#83-38).

Ohio Amish Directory for Geauga County and Vicinity, (1973 and 1982). As a supplement to the directory-derived information, interviews were conducted with 14 Amish leaders and with several non-Amish informants who resided within the geographic boundaries of the settlement.

CONCEPTUAL ORIENTATION

How can Amish society best be conceptualized? Anyone who is generally familiar with America's Old Order Amish people knows that their culture differs dramatically from that of the surrounding industrial civilization. The Amish for example, travel by horse and buggy, farm with horses, speak an archaic dialect of German among themselves, prohibit the use of electricity in their homes, and wear plain, dark clothing resembling the garb worn by their Swiss-German ancestors over 200 years ago. Such obvious differences have at times led outsiders to view the Amish as being a living example of an anachronistic folk society; a society that has managed, however temporarily, to forestall the modernizing, homogenizing influences of the 20th century. Some outsiders have also pitied members of the sect for what they regard as their "backwardness," and have assumed that such backwardness was a reflection of religious fanaticism and/or irrational, superstitious thinking.

A deeper familiarity with the Amish, however, leads to the discovery of numerous elements of modernity within their culture. For instance, Amish buggies may be fabricated of moulded fiberglass parts, may be equipped with hydraulic brakes, or even may display solar cell panels on their rooftops for recharging lantern batteries. Similarly, it is now fairly common to observe members of the Amish faith riding in (but not driving) other people's cars or using pay telephones. While such practices may seem inconsistent to some non-Amish persons, they are regarded as being situationally acceptable in almost all Old Order communities and are not considered to be violations of religious values.

Because the Amish do consciously, rationally, and selectively employ modern technologies and social practices, they do not provide a fitting example of a folk society. Folk societies are characterized by non-rational, or by irrational, conformity to traditional norms, but the members of Amish communities rationally discuss and publicly evaluate proposed innovations using their traditional values as general guides to democratically-ratified social action (Olshan 1981). The decision to adopt, or not to adopt, a particular innovation is always weighed against the anticipated effects that its adoption would have upon the Amish family, the cohesiveness of the small church community, and the preservation of sacred values. Each church community, which consists of about 20-50 families, votes semiannually upon proposed changes in its local *Ordnung* (community standards or norms). Before voting, the Bible and sacred Anabaptist texts may be consulted and cited as authoritative references in arguing the merits of a specific proposal (Hostetler 1980). The outcome of voting is apt to reflect a cautious balance between the mundane survival needs of a community and its members' strong committment to Anabaptist religious ideals. Weber's term, *Wertrational* action, which implies the use of reason to achieve value-determined goals, seems to most accurately describe the behavior of the Amish in this respect (Weber 1968). Clearly, a society that conforms to a *Wertrational* pattern should more flexibly adapt to change than should a tradition-bound folk society. The historic success of the Amish in resisting cultural assimilation, in contrast with folk societies, is I believe, at least partly due to this difference in approach to the problems posed by change.

But if the Amish are not typical of folk societies, neither do they represent a special type of industrial society. The principal features of industrial social organization are conspicuously absent from Amish communities; e.g., there is little occupational or educational specialization

(most Amishmen are small farmers or skilled manual workers); there are no social classes; no mass-production technologies (unless the Amish are employed by outsiders); no bureaucracies or bureaucrats; no emphasis upon the accumulation of great wealth or upon unbounded material growth; no urban dwellers and virtually no serious crime. Furthermore, charismatic movements and leaders are viewed with deep suspicion by the steady pacifistic Amish, who generally believe that leaders should be humble, self-restrained, and conformists, rather than aggressively individualistic, emotional, or reformist. One thus finds no evangelists, no missionaries, and no political zealots among the ranks of the Old Order. Fanaticism is alien to the essential moderation and conservatism of the Amish character.

What is to be found at the center of the Amish *ethos* is: rationality in the service of family, community and religion; deliberate non-conformity to the secular world; a preference for small-scale communities and enterprises; and a respect for nature and manual labor. Above all, there is a strong sense of humility, which avoids unchecked striving and ambition and which seeks to control and limit nearly all spheres of human behavior.

I intentionally avoided any reference to farming in describing Amish culture. Recent studies have shown that today only about half of the heads of Amish households are engaged in farming on a full-time basis (Hostetler 1980). This trend, which is further documented in the present study, has caused some observers of Amish society to predict the possible loss, among the Amish, of their distinctive cultural identity (Schwieder and Schwieder 1975). This is a viewpoint that I do not share because I do not consider farming to be so much a determinant of Amish culture as it has been an effect and a particular historical expression of it. This is not to imply that there will not be important social changes associated with this occupational shift, but rather, that being Amish is not, and has never been, synonymous with following a farming lifestyle.

My view is that, besides conforming to Weber's (1968) *Wertrational* type, the Old Order Amish also closely approximate the criteria that Schumacher (1973) and others have identified as the hallmarks of an ideal conserver, or ecologically-balanced, society; a society that highly values spirituality, voluntary simplicity and living harmoniously with man and nature. Schumacher's ideal criteria specifically include: (1) a non-competitive, non-violent, non-materialistic social philosophy that limits its members in terms of material possessions and worldly ambitions; (2) decentralized self-government and local participatory democracy; (3) community self-reliance; (4) use of energy-saving appropriate, or intermediate, technologies; (5) escape from fossil fuel dependency; (6) freedom from consumer-oriented education, and (7) freedom from structural unemployment.

I have elsewhere (Foster 1981) explained how Amish society largely fulfills each of the above criteria, and these explanations need not be repeated here. However, my point is that the essence of being Amish may be more closely related to these "ecological ideals" than to such often-mentioned practices as farming for a living or having large numbers of children.

This paper presents empirical evidence which supports this conceptual interpretation and suggests that there may, indeed, be occupational alternatives besides farming that are open to the Amish and that will also allow members of the sect to preserve their distinct cultural identity.

The justification for employing occupational data in evaluating social change among the Amish should be obvious since several authors have viewed the movement out of farming, and into other vocations, as important or critical for the future of Old Order society. In addition, the previous occupational research of Martineau and MacQueen (1977), among others, provides an empirical basis for making comparisons

between the occupational structures of different settlement areas.

STUDY SITE

The Amish settlement which extends over Ohio's Geauga, Ashtabula, and Trumbull counties was selected for study during the winter of 1982-1983 for 2 reasons: (1) I was already involved in an on-going study there to determine the physical and cultural boundaries of the settlement, and (2) the area offered a particularly appropriate setting in which to observe and measure the influences of modernization and factory work upon Old Order communities because of the large number of industries there that employed Amish workers.

The 3-county settlement is the second largest in Ohio with an overall Amish population of about 6,500, but it is located only 56 km east of Cleveland. Although the region has become a minor tourist attraction for Clevelanders, due perhaps to its rural quaintness and its urban proximity, it is also a study in contrasts. Many of the secondary roads in the area have no electric utility poles because only Amish live in certain districts yet the area has long been industrialized. The town of Middlefield (population 2,000) for instance, which lies at the center of the settlement, contains more than a dozen light industries, including 2 rubber factories and a cheese factory. At the time of the study, Amish workers reportedly comprised about 30% of a total work force of 400 in the largest of the rubber factories.

The Amish of the region are also closely integrated into non-Amish farming and residential areas. There are even a few town-dwelling Amish families in the settlement. Even more uncharacteristic is the appearance, in some rural districts, of electric lines which run to the homes and outbuildings of Amish-occupied farms; on these same farms Amishmen may sometimes be seen driving tractors or using modern milking machines, all of which appear to contradict long-established Amish customs. But such apparent contradictions are often misleading and what seems to be a wholesale surrender to the modern world on the part of the Geauga Amish may represent only an economic accommodation to it. For example, one soon learns that electricity, milking machines and the use of tractors (for cultivation) are used only by Amish share farmers who are specifically exempted from conforming to their district's taboos against these technologies. The exceptions are made because the Amish understand that their share farmers, who typically farm on a 50% basis, must earn higher profits for their landlords if they are to effectively compete with non-Amish share farmers.

But while share farming accounts for a relatively small number of Amish-occupied farms in the settlement (perhaps 10-15%), there have been more widespread, and perhaps more serious, examples of economic accommodation there; e.g., the emergence, since the early 1950s, of substantial numbers of Amish factory workers. The present study specifically posed the following questions of the tri-county Geauga settlement area: (1) what is the statistical distribution of occupations i.e., the ratio of farming to non-traditional occupations and to traditional, but non-farming, occupations?, (2) how are occupations geographically distributed?, (3) how has the occupational structure changed over time during the period 1973-1982?, and (4) has factory employment led to the emergence of cultural differences between Amish farmers and Amish factory workers?

METHODS

The 1973 and 1982 Ohio Amish Directories were systematically reviewed and the occupations of all employed male household heads listed were divided into 4 categories: (1) primarily farming, (2) non-farming traditional (carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, harness makers, etc.), (3) non-farming non-traditional (factory workers, machinists, mechanics, and welders) and (4) factory workers (a subcategory of number 3 above). These listings made possible numerical comparisons of the various categories of employment as well as changes in the types of occupations over time.

The 1982 directory was used to calculate the percentage of farmers, factory workers, etc. who lived in the settlement's 39 listed church districts to ascertain if occupational differences existed between geographic areas.

Interviews were conducted with 12 Amish leaders (bishops, deacons, ministers) of the settlement who had been previously selected on the basis of criteria used in the original study. The original protocol called for the selection of subjects whose districts defined what were believed to be the physical boundaries of the settlement, as well as one subject who had earlier been involved in the compilation of the Amish directories for the area. In the amended study, these subjects were asked additional questions concerning any cultural differences that they might be aware of between church districts, particularly between those districts whose members were predominantly involved in farming and those whose members were mainly factory workers. Finally, 2 Amish leaders, who resided in centralized districts of the settlement and several non-Amish persons who were knowledgeable about the area, were interviewed. The latter subjects included a feed-store owner, a county agent, and several local businessmen.

Using 1982 directory data, mean completed family size was calculated for the settlement, the families of farmers and factory workers' families.

RESULTS

The 1982 directory lists the occupations of 891 employed male household heads. Two-hundred-seventy-seven or 31% of the total are listed as farmers (most were dairy farmers; a few raised hogs or poultry). There were 333 male household heads (37%) engaged in non-farming traditional occupations and 281 (32%) who were involved in non-traditional employment. Included within the latter category were 219 factory workers (25%).

The sample is atypical because of the relatively small percentage of subjects who listed farming as their primary occupation. The obtained mean of 31%, for farming, may be compared with Martineau and MacQueen's (1977) figure of 66% for the Lancaster Co., PA, settlement, and with 41% in 1973 for all Ohio settlements (Hostetler 1980). Clearly farming is no longer the major economic activity in the settlement, and farmers were outnumbered by non-farmers by over 2 to 1. It would not, however, be correct to conclude that factory work was inexorably displacing farming in the region.

Table 1 indicates that during the 9-year period, 1973-1982, the percentage of factory employment actually increased less than did the percentage of those engaged in farming. Over the same time period, the settlement experienced a moderate growth in members from 1,831 to 2,419 baptized adults. What factors might account for the slower growth rate of factory employment (15%)?

TABLE 1

Occupation of heads of Amish households and mean number of live births per completed family, Geauga-Trumbull-Ashtabula Co., Ohio, Old Order Amish settlement area, 1973 and 1982.

Population	1973 N	1973 %	1982 N	1982 %	$\frac{N_{1982}}{N_{1973}} \times 100$	Mean live births per completed family, 1982
Districts	32	100	39	100	+22%	7.7
Households	825	100	1086	100	+32	7.7
Members	1831	100	2419	100	+32	—
Male employed household heads	791	100	891	100	+13	7.7
Farming	223	28	277	31	+24	9.0
Traditional non-farming	NA	NA	333	37	NA	NA
Non-traditional non-farming	NA	NA	281	32	NA	NA
Factory work	190	24	219	25	+15	6.4
Other	NA	NA	62	7	NA	NA

Comments made by 2 of the bishops interviewed suggested that factory work had become considerably less popular with the youth of the settlement than it had been 4 or 5 years earlier. These leaders were of the opinion that Amish youth were rapidly discovering that factory jobs were both personally unrewarding and economically undependable.

The personnel officer of a major corporate employer of Amish factory workers in the settlement agreed that the popularity of factory employment had declined and said that the number of sect members that were employed by her firm had decreased by about 20% during the preceding 5 years. She added that Amish employees were in demand but that the Amish were less frequently applying for jobs.

The Amish leaders generally agreed that most of the young men of their communities would prefer to farm, if they could afford to do so, and said that many other young men wanted to enter traditional (non-farming) occupations and/or to start their own home businesses. The leaders also stated however that factory work did serve useful purposes for their communities, such as permitting some young Amishmen to finance their way into farming or self-employment. The interviewees denied that factory work served as a barrier to full participation in Amish community life and one of the bishops pointed out that he had himself retired from a local factory after nearly 30 years of service as a "model maker."

I next determined the distribution of occupations by church district. A district-by-district comparison was conducted, and it was found that the percentage who listed farming as a primary occupation ranged from a district high of 61% to a low of 3%. The district percentages in the traditional, but non-farming, category ranged from 12 to 59%, while the district percentages for the non-farming, non-traditional group varied from 3.6 to 63%. The comparative ranges for church districts in the Lancaster Co. study (Martineau and MacQueen 1977) were: farming, 38 to 96%; traditional non-farming, 2 to 42%; and non-farming, non-traditional, zero to 34%.

Another pertinent question for our analysis related to the spatial patterning of occupations. Are the Amish who work in non-traditional occupations any more likely to be found in or near the heavily populated and commercial zones of the settlement? And where, specifically, are the districts which contain the largest concentrations of those who are primarily engaged in farming?

To answer this question, the church district was again used as the unit of analysis. To check the relationship between a high concentration of non-traditional occupations in a district and its relation to business and commercial areas, the 7 districts with the highest and lowest percentages of non-traditional employment were focused upon. Table 2 shows that the 5 districts with the highest percentages of non-traditional occupations were all located in Middlefield districts; these districts were also the most commercialized and the most industrialized within the settlement area. In addition, 39% of all Amish factory workers included in the 1982 data for male household heads resided in Middlefield districts.

When the locations of the 7 districts with the largest percentages of farmers (table 2) were plotted geographically, they were found to form an approximate square frame around the core Middlefield districts. Interspersed between the commercial core districts and the outlying farming districts was a middle zone of districts whose occupational structures tended to be fairly evenly balanced between the 3 broad employment categories used in the study. The only exception was that the 6 major traditional, but non-farming, districts also were located in the latter, middle zone; these were concentrated in areas immediately south and east of the Middlefield commercial core districts. Only one district, Bloomfield (Trumbull Co. Amish) lay outside the 16-22 km wide square,

TABLE 2

Amish church districts with the highest percentages of non-traditional, traditional (non-farming), and traditional (farming), types of employment, Geauga-Trumbull-Ashtabula Co. Settlement, 1982. *

Church District	Percent Non-Traditional	Church District	Percent Traditional (Non-farming)	Church District	Percent Traditional (Farming)
Middlefield SE	63.3	Farmington SE	58.8	Farmington E	61.1
Middlefield S	61.5	Mesopotamia N	58.8	Burton W	59.2
Middlefield		Mespo Hill	57.1	Troy NW	50.0
Old State Rd. S	55.0	Parkman Middle	56.7	S. Windsor	48.0
Middlefield	52.0	Garrettsville	50.0	Middlefield NE	47.8
Middlefield		Parkman N	50.0	Mesopotamia	47.0
Middle N	50.0	S Troy	50.0	S Troy	46.0
Huntsburg SE	45.8				
Mespotamia W	45.4				

*The 7 districts with the lowest percentages of non-traditional employment were: S Troy 3.6, Parkman Middle 8.0, Troy NW 12.5, Hayes Corner 14.2, Burton W 14.8, Parkman N 15.3, and Farmington NE 16.6.

adjoining it to the east. Bloomfield was significant because it was a major growth district in the settlement; its growth reflected a gradual internal migration trend toward the settlement's eastern boundaries and away from the expanding suburbs of Cleveland. During the period 1973-1982, the number of farms in Bloomfield had doubled from 5 to 10, and the number of adult members had increased from 49 to 79. The reasons for this eastern migration, according to the Bloomfield bishops, were that more open farmland and more reasonably priced land were available there.

A final question was whether major cultural differences had developed within the settlement that might be separating church districts whose members were mostly factory workers from those whose members were mainly farmers. To this question the Amish leaders consistently replied that there were no major differences in beliefs between or within church districts that reflected differences in members' occupations. The bishops repeatedly said, "We are one people," and "we have but one religion." On the other hand, the leaders admitted that there were several "more conservative" districts within the settlement, which were located "east of Middlefield," and these districts' members preferred not to be in full fellowship (attend church services) in the settlement's other districts. However, the main point of disagreement between the more conservative and more liberal districts was said to center, not upon the question of factory work, but rather, upon the issue of whether or not motorized horse-drawn "hay bailers and hay crimpers" should be used by their members who farmed.

A second difference, that was consistent with previous studies, showed that the mean completed family size of factory workers was 6.4 births per family, as compared to the farmers' 9 births per family (Erickson et. al. 1979). This statistic reflected obvious differences in attitudes toward family size and perhaps toward the use of contraceptive devices. Although the Amish religion prohibits the use of any form of artificial birth control, a public health nurse (with experience in another Ohio Amish settlement) told the author that she had often distributed contraceptives to the wives of Amish factory workers at their request.

Other than those noted above, no major differences were observed to exist between Amish farmers and factory workers. The customs, dress and houses of the 2 groups appeared to be identical. A host of questions could be raised concerning the meaning and the effects of possible contraceptive use by some Amish families. But in the absence of sufficient empirical data, it is

better to avoid such speculation. It should merely be pointed out that, unless the use of contraceptives is also associated with a continuing decline in the average size of factory workers' families, a more or less constant birthrate of 6.4 would have little demographic impact upon a community in which only 25% of the male household heads are employed in industry. In any event, this is a subject that merits further investigation.

DISCUSSION

The fact that few differences were found to exist between Amish farmers and factory workers does not prove that there were no other differences. The methodology of the study relied upon informants and directory information and did not directly compare representative groups of farmers and factory workers, as would have been desirable. Nevertheless, the findings do imply that the Geauga Amish have experienced some success at integrating factory work into the framework of their traditional sociocultural system. There was no evidence that any radical changes in values or in behaviors were occurring among Amish factory workers or in districts whose members were predominantly factory workers.

The findings therefore do not support the scholarly position that the Amish movement out of agriculture will also lead to a severe transformation in Old Order culture. Conversely, it appears that an Amish settlement can establish an ongoing equilibrium between a certain level of factory employment and other, more traditional, types of work without losing its distinctive cultural identity.

Finally, while recognizing that the Geauga Amish have partially adapted to factory employment, it is my opinion that factory work alone can never suffice to form a permanent economic base for the maintenance of culturally stable Amish communities. But the choice in most Amish settlements is not just between farming and factory work. About 25% of the Amish families I visited in Geauga were involved in some sort of home business or cottage industry, either as a principal source of income, or as a supplement to family farming. In fact, cottage industry employment appears to be growing rapidly in most Amish areas, and it may offer one of the best economic hopes for the sect's continued cultural survival. This is because cottage industry work is less alien to traditional Amish values than factory employment, and yet it fulfills many of the same social functions as does the family farm. For instance, such small enterprises as furniture or cabinet shops, buggy making shops, home bakeries, harness makers, etc., like farming but unlike factory work, permit Amish proprietors to maintain ownership and control over their work environments, to remain and work with family members during the day, to socialize children into Amish traditions of hard work and good craftsmanship, and to employ raw materials, methods of manufacture, and small technologies that are of their own choosing. The trend toward cottage industry employment is so recent however that it has not yet been systematically explored. It clearly deserves to be the subject of future empirical study.

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